

this month, 33 tribes will be recognized with Congressional Gold Medals to celebrate this significant contribution during the Second World War. This recognition is both historic and overdue.

Throughout the military history of the United States, Native Americans have served bravely and honorably. We are grateful to these soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen for their tradition of unwavering patriotism.

As we celebrate Native American contributions to our country, we must also examine the unique struggles faced by these communities and work together to find solutions. I am proud of the significant steps we took earlier this year to confront the long-ignored epidemic of violence against Native women through reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, a bill I authored with Senator CRAPO. Nearly three out of five Indian women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners. On some reservations, Native American women are murdered at a rate more than times the national average. Those statistics are chilling. Native women are being brutalized and killed at rates that simply shock the conscience.

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization of 2013 addresses this problem directly and provides landmark protections for Native American women. These include expanding the jurisdiction of tribal courts in several ways. First, the law clarifies that tribal courts have the authority to issue and enforce tribal protection orders, a tool that is necessary to stop the escalation of violence. Second, and perhaps most importantly, it recognizes the jurisdiction of tribal courts to prosecute non-Indians who abuse Native women on tribal lands.

More than 50 percent of Native American women are married to non-Native American men. Before the Violence Against Women Act was reauthorized this year, tribal courts were unable to prosecute these men if they committed acts of domestic abuse. The Federal authorities who had jurisdiction were often hours away from tribal lands and ill-equipped to prosecute these crimes. As a result, countless victims were left without protection and offenders were allowed to prey upon women with impunity. As a former prosecutor, I was appalled, and I am proud that we fixed this glaring problem with the enactment of these historic changes.

Beyond resolving jurisdictional issues, VAWA improved the grant making process to Indian tribal coalitions to ensure tribes are better able to respond to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking. It creates new Federal crimes with tougher penalties for offenses often committed against Native American women and encourages greater cooperation between the Federal Government and tribal governments.

The success of VAWA, and the inclusion of these historic provisions, was the result of years of careful investiga-

tion and creative problem solving. We worked closely with tribal leaders and the National Congress of American Indians and in close consultation with the Indian Affairs Committee. I would like to thank the former chairman of that committee, Senator Daniel Akaka, and current chairwoman MARIA CANTWELL for their cooperation and persistence on these important measures.

Another area of law critical to the protection of civil rights for Native Americans is the Voting Rights Act. I am working hard with members from both sides of the aisle to restore the vital protections of this landmark law, undermined by the Supreme Court's recent decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*.

The Voting Rights Act is the most successful piece of civil rights legislation in this Nation's history. It has worked to protect the Constitution's guarantees against racial discrimination in voting for nearly five decades. It has helped minorities of all races—including Native Americans—overcome major barriers to participation in the political process. For example, in 2008, in Charles Mix County, SD, the Department of Justice found evidence of discriminatory intent by the officials of the county, who had attempted to dilute the voting strength of Native Americans. The Voting Rights Act prevented these discriminatory actions from taking place. It is imperative that we reinvigorate and restore these protections.

In addition to our legislative efforts, we are also making strides in confirming Native American judges to our Federal courts. President Obama nominated Diane J. Humetewa, a Native American woman, to serve on the U.S. district court for Arizona on September 19, 2013. Humetewa, a member of the Hopi Tribe, was the U.S. attorney in Arizona between 2007 and 2009, a position to which she was nominated by former President George W. Bush at the urging of Senator JOHN MCCAIN. If the Senate confirms her nomination, she would become the only active member of a Native American tribe to serve in the Federal judiciary and the first Native American woman ever to serve on the Federal bench.

This month, let us celebrate the Native American contributions that make this Nation better and stronger. And let us renew our commitment to work together with leaders of these sovereign nations to address ongoing challenges to ensure that all who live in this great country are afforded the respect, dignity and opportunities they deserve.

EMPLOYEE BENEFIT RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Mr. BAUCUS. Mr. President, I rise today to congratulate the Employee Benefit Research Institute on their 35th anniversary. EBRI was founded in 1978 with the purpose of conducting re-

search on employee benefit plans and distributing that information to the public. Their mission "is to contribute to, to encourage, and to enhance the development of sound employee benefit programs and sound public policy through objective research and education."

EBRI has fulfilled its mission and purpose for 35 years in a nonpartisan and unbiased manner. That is why EBRI's research staff is frequently asked to testify before Congress, including several times before the Finance Committee. EBRI produces trustworthy analysis on both health and retirement issues. EBRI does not take policy positions and they do not lobby—they provide us with just the facts without spin. When it comes to retirement and health policy, EBRI is an indispensable source of expert data. And that is why both Members and our staff on Capitol Hill depend on their expertise and reliability.

I salute EBRI and its staff for 35 years of exceptional work and look forward to their continued help in the future.

TRIBUTE TO GARY OSTROSKE

Ms. LANDRIEU. Mr. President, today I wish to ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mr. Gary Ostroske, who retired on July 1, 2013, as President and CEO of the United Way of Southeast Louisiana. Mr. Ostroske has been an integral part of the United Way Worldwide system for 40 years and has served as President and CEO of the Southeastern region for the past 25 years.

Throughout his tenure at the United Way, Mr. Ostroske implemented important changes to a wide breadth of programs to improve the lives of residents of Southeast Louisiana. Mr. Ostroske has worked tirelessly to provide citizens with quality healthcare, education, and human services and has undoubtedly provided many opportunities for residents of Southeast Louisiana to succeed and improve their lives.

As the President and CEO of United Way of Southeast Louisiana, Mr. Ostroske worked collaboratively with community organizations and Greater New Orleans leaders to create innovative ways to deliver critical services to Southeast Louisiana residents. Through these community partnerships, Mr. Ostroske strengthened United Way's impact and allowed it to play an integral role in crafting a strong economic agenda for our region.

Mr. Ostroske's unwavering leadership in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Isaac and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill was truly remarkable. Mr. Ostroske's diligent efforts to rebuild our region after these disasters ensured our region's renewed sense of vitality and economic strength.

Upon his retirement, Mr. Ostroske is looking forward to volunteering in our community and spending time with his wife of 35 years, Mary Ann and his family—their son, Peter Ostroske, president of O Look!, an internet company